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KONCENT

TUCKED AWAY AMONGST HAWKER SHOPS AND OFFICES IN THE SUNWAYMAS COMMERCIAL CENTRE, KONCENT IS A SAFE HAVEN FOR THOSE WHO LIKE THEIR DECOR WITH A BIT OF QUIRK.

From the outside, the shop lot that houses Koncent looks small, almost narrow, like its neighbours. Still, the full-length windows at the entrance permit glances inside, whilst adding natural light to the overall bright and clean interiors. Parking can be a bit of a problem, but oh, is the trip worth it.

Put away convention; Koncent is most certainly not the place for it. With shelving a-plenty and whitewashed walls for simplicity, the shop is filled with a curious, but interesting assortment of products that all at once, catch the eyes and grab at your attention. It's all interesting, which is why a quick walkthrough just isn't enough. The products demand that one lingers, with minutes spent poring over detailed descriptions for each item upon the shelves.

Beautifully-made bowls sit alongside neutral-hued teapots, and across the room, two gorgeous wolf-tailed stools seem almost alive, the tails drooping,



daring you to reach out and touch the soft fur. Fruity notepads, animal-shaped rubber bands, hanging plastic men that hold your cup-noodle covers closed, hand-crafted wooden pins, and various other ingenious items stand at the ready. It's a perfect collection of things that one would never know they needed so very badly.

The duo behind the ingenuity of Koncent Malaysia is Mike Saw and Patrick Chin, who in recent years have been the owners behind

the Jeckyll & Hyde Project in Bangsar Shopping Centre, with the latter also running interior design firm Prideworks above the lot. With backgrounds in graphic and interior design and business between the pair of them, Koncent most certainly has a solidly-built direction. "We've been in business with our suppliers, H Concept Co Ltd in Tokyo ever since going into the retail business five years ago." Mike says. "H Concept has been producing wonderful designs for the past 13 years, and opened the first Koncent in Japan four years ago. We were eager to open one in our homeland."

Still, it wasn't all sunshine and roses importing foreign products locally. The price point remains a challenge, especially given the authenticity of Koncent's products. "It's either we do it, or we don't do it at all." Mike says. "So of course, we chose to do it, even though marketing in Malaysia won't be as easy. Somebody's got to do it. I cannot imagine a place where everything we own or use is the same, dull, and comes only from one source."

Certainly, the store's products are unequivocally Japanese in influence and design, and quite unlike much of what we're presented with locally. There's much of the cleverness, thoughtfulness, and bright ideas many of us have come to expect in Japanese design. "A well-designed item truly aims to make people's lives happier." Mike says. "But to sustain this happiness, it has to be a well thought-out design that is practical and functional, as well as made with quality. Many brands in the market promise the same philosophy, but not all are willing to deliver quality materials at a higher cost."

It's true that quality plays a significant role in Koncent's products and core philosophy. The products one finds within the store all seem to radiate a sort of thoughtfulness, as if the crafter had done so with the end user specifically in mind. As Mike puts it, Koncent's products are "Eclectic, Functional, and Revolutionary."

We don't disagree.

Beyond interior decor items, however, Koncent also presents as a cafe of sorts. Cakes from Tray Cafe stand in pride of place at the counter, ready to be sliced and served with cups of coffee, which Mike himself brews. The combination is charmingly simple, and so very perfect, when one considers the prospect of coffee when browsing the store. Still, the cafe does more, yet.

"Koncent is not just about promoting and selling Japanese design products," Mike adds. "Designers may appreciate the products we offer, and perhaps consider getting them for their own use or for projects, but we're also a design platform that allows other designers to be able to showcase their work here to the public. They'll be able to test their market response, or hopefully be inspired to do something wonderful just by looking at the works of others." ●

KONCENT IS LOCATED AT 30-1, JALAN PJU 1/30, SUNWAY MAS COMMERCIAL CENTER, PETALING JAYA, SELANGOR. FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.KONCENT.COM.MY.

